

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

100th anniversary of the Weeks Act

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

In much heralded celebrations, Great Smoky Mountains National Park celebrated their 75th anniversary last year and the Blue Ridge Parkway is currently celebrating their 75th anniversary. As important as those are, next year brings an even bigger anniversary – the event that led to the creation of the National Forests in the Eastern U.S.

2011 marks the 100th anniversary of the Weeks Act, the law that authorized the federal government to purchase land and establish national forests in the Eastern United States. The law came at a time of massive clearing of eastern forests and with that an upwelling of local support for conserving forest lands. Efforts to protect Eastern forests on the grounds of recreation or scenery met with resistance, however forests provide numerous services and the fact that they help control floods by capturing rainwater and releasing it into stream over time helped give supporters the argument they needed to win passage of the law.

This law led to the creation of our Eastern National Forests, including the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests in Western North Carolina, the Cherokee National Forest in Eastern Tennessee, the Chattahoochee National Forest in North Georgia, and the Sumter National forest in upstate South Carolina. In fact, the land that is today Great Smoky Mountains National Park was once considered for National Forest designation under this law.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.